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Formerly vice president for centers of peacebuilding innovation at the United States Institute of Peace, he led teams there working on

rule of law, religion, economics, media, technology, security sector governance, and gender. He was also vice president for peace and stability operations at USIP, where he led its peacebuilding work in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan, and the Balkans and served as Executive Director of the Hamilton/Baker Iraq Study Group. Serwer has worked on preventing inter-ethnic and sectarian conflict in Iraq and has facilitated dialogue between Serbs and Albanias in the Balkans.

As a minister-counselor at the U.S. Department of State, Serwer directed the European office of intelligence and research and served as U.S. special envoy and coordinator for the Bosnian Federation, mediating between Croats and Muslims and negotiating the first agreement reached at the Dayton peace talks. From 1990 to 1993, he was deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Rome, leading a major diplomatic mission through the end of the Cold War and the first Gulf War.